

REMARKS

Applicants appreciate the Examiner's thorough examination of the present application as evidenced by the final Office Action of October 22, 2003 (hereinafter "Office Action"). Applicants especially appreciate the allowance of Claims 1, 3, 4, and 7 - 10, and the indication that dependent Claim 16 recites patentable subject matter. In response, to advance prosecution and to facilitate an early allowance of the present application, Applicants have amended independent Claim 11 to incorporate the recitations of Claims 12, 15, and 16. Accordingly, Claims 12, 15, and 16 have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer and dependent Claim 13 has been amended to correct its dependency. Independent method Claim 29 has also been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. As a result, the title has been amended to be consistent with the claimed subject matter.

CONCLUSION

In light of the above amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully submit that the above-entitled application is now in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration of this application, as amended, is respectfully requested. If, in the opinion of the Examiner, a telephonic conference would expedite the examination of this matter, the Examiner is invited to call the undersigned attorney at (919) 854-1400.

It is not believed that an extension of time and/or additional fee(s)-including fees for net addition of claims-are required, beyond those that may otherwise be provided for in documents accompanying this paper. In the event, however, that an extension of time is necessary to allow consideration of this paper, such an extension is hereby petitioned under 37 C.F.R. §1.136(a). Any additional fees believed to be due in connection with this paper may be charged to our Deposit Account No. 50-0220.

Respectfully submitted,



D. Scott Moore
Registration No. 42,011

Customer No. 20792

Myers Bigel Sibley & Sajovec
P. O. Box 37428
Raleigh, North Carolina 27627
Telephone: (919) 854-1400
Facsimile: (919) 854-1401

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I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service with sufficient postage as first class mail in an envelope addressed to: Mail Stop AF, Commissioner for Patents, PO Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450 on January 21, 2004.


Traci A. Brown